



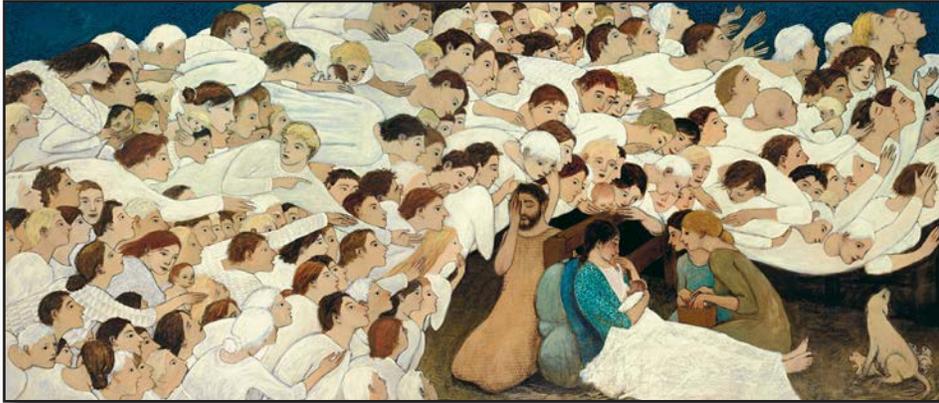
First Press

A Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor
December 2016 ■ Volume 64, Number 10



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Nativity © Brian Kershisnik, used with permission from the artist

Dear Friends,

For many of us, December is synonymous with Christmas. It may surprise you that even for us Christians, this has not always been the case. The early church did not celebrate Christmas (a mash-up of Christ and Mass). At the direction of his city fathers in Geneva, the holiday was reluctantly observed in the 16th Century by John Calvin, whom we name the Father of the Reformed Tradition (which is our theological heritage). About one hundred years later, between 1659 and 1681, it was illegal to celebrate Christmas in Massachusetts, and Christmas did not become an official holiday in the United States until 1870. The reasons Christmas wasn't celebrated – and the reasons it now is – are many. John Calvin railed against singling out one day “on a whim” and stressed instead the importance of giving honor and praise to God every day. Scripture does not tell us the date on which Jesus was born. It does tell of a bright-beyond-compare star, which has led modern day researchers to do myriad calculations to pin down an actual date. In the first part of the 19th Century in America, Christmas included loud carousing and has been likened to a December Mardi Gras, and commercialism has been a part of Christmas since before the holiday was widely observed. If your December is not as crazy with festivities and preparations as in some years, you might enjoy reading *The Battle for Christmas*, a most interesting book (and Pulitzer Prize finalist) by Stephen Nissenbaum.

What about Christmas 2016 for us? Even the youngest among us know we need the Prince of Peace, the embodiment of good news, the Savior of Humankind to come among us. The season of Advent includes the ready prayer, “Come quickly, Lord Jesus.” Come to your needy world.

As we at First Pres prepare for the birth of God, as we prepare for the coming of the Lord, let us live into the words of *Joy to the World*. Let every heart prepare Him room. Let us prepare him room in how we regard one another, in how we care for one another, in how we put another's interests above our own. No more let sins and sorrows grow. Forgive and accept forgiveness. Be tender toward another. Show compassion. Listen. Be slow to judge and ready to find points of agreement. Then wonders of his love may begin to appear and bring joy to the world -- God's fondest hope and our most earnest prayer.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Dr. Fairfax F. Fair
Pastor/Head of Staff



Christmas Eve Worship

3:00 p.m. - Christmas Pageant

Children ages three and older are invited to participate in this worship service that tells the story of Jesus' birth.

Candlelight Worship Services

5:00 & 7:00 p.m. - Lessons & Carols

Beginning at 4:30 and 6:30 p.m. the Chancel Choir, brass ensemble, organ and percussion will present John Rutter's *Gloria* as the prelude.

11:00 p.m. - Communion

Our Candlelight Worship Service includes special music, a sermon, and Communion.

Christmas Day Worship

10:00 a.m. - Family Worship

The building will be closed:

Thursday, November 24
Friday, November 25
Monday, December 26
Monday, January 2





The Season of Advent



Gift of the Magi

Be a part of this wonderful intergenerational, gift-giving event within our First Pres family. You/your family will be paired with another First Pres individual, couple or family. During Advent, you commit to do three things:

1. To pray for the individual, couple, or family whose name you are given.
2. To make something for the individual, couple, or family during Advent.
3. To do something for the individual, couple, or family during Advent.

The individual, couple, or family assigned to you does not know initially who has their name. When you register, another person participating in the Gift of the Magi will have your name and be giving to you throughout Advent!

To participate, register at www.firstpresbyterian.org before November 23. On November 25 you will receive the name of a special person, couple, or family assigned to you. Brainstorm ideas for how to fulfill your commitment to do three things (see above) for that person/family. Determine when and how you will do these things. On Sunday, November 27, begin “giving” to the person assigned to you. When you sign up, someone will have your name and be doing 1, 2, and 3 for you also! The person you are assigned and the person who gets your name will not be the same person. You may keep your identity a secret until December 20, or reveal yourself right away. Questions? Contact Rev. Melissa Anne Rogers at 662-4466, ext. 390 or mrogers@firstpresbyterian.org.



Join the Children’s Choir

All children, grades K-5 are invited to sing in the Children’s Choir, which will sing for the beginning of the 9:30 a.m. service each Sunday of Advent and during the Christmas Pageant. Children’s Choir rehearses 10:30-10:55 a.m. Sunday mornings.

Handel’s Messiah on Sundays in Advent

November 27 – December 18

The Chancel Choir will present parts of Handel’s *Messiah* during worship on Sundays in Advent, culminating in a special 40 minute presentation from Part I, given by the Chancel Choir, soloists, and chamber orchestra.

All-Church Christmas Dinner

Register today for the All-Church Christmas Dinner, Sunday, December 4 at 5:30 p.m. in the Social Hall. Join us for a splendid meal, great fun, and carols! The evening’s menu includes glazed ham, homemade cranberry sauce, wild mushroom polenta with Fontina cheese, sauteed green beans, tossed salad with dried cherries and pecans with a pomegranate vinaigrette dressing, cheesecake and eggnog and cider, too! A jazz quartet of Community High School students will be our special guests. Cost is \$8 per person or \$30 for a family of four or more (immediate family only please). The doors to the Social Hall will open at 5:00 p.m. **RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED.** We are limited to 240 people, so save your place now at: <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/allchurch-christmas-dinner/>



Advent Email Devotional

Advent devotionals, written by members and staff, will arrive in your inbox beginning November 27. Want to receive them? Sign up at <http://firstpresbyterian.org/daily-devotionals-signup>. A limited number of large print copies are available in the Church Office.

Family to Family Christmas

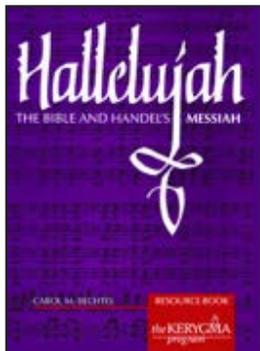
For many in our community, the holidays are a time of anxiety and worry about affording gifts for their children or Christmas dinner for their family. In Washtenaw County, where almost 20% of residents live in poverty, the Christmas blessings we take for granted may be out of reach for many. “Adopt” a local family in need and purchase gifts and/or food according to their needs. Families range from disabled or elderly individuals to families of six or more. You may select a family and purchase items according to their needs, and then deliver the gifts personally or have an FTF volunteer deliver them for you. Alternatively, financial contributions may be made to purchase gift cards for families not directly adopted, as well as families in need who have young people at Mott Children’s and U-M Hospitals during the holidays. Sign-up tables to adopt families will be available after morning services on November 27, December 4, and December 11 in the Social Hall. Donations may be made at the sign-up table or by using the special pew envelopes beginning November 27. You can also adopt a family at www.firstpresbyterian.org, or by contacting Julie Morrison at dornmorrison@gmail.com or 668-0420. Volunteers are also needed to help deliver gifts on the afternoon of December 18.



Boy Scout Troop 7 Wreath Sale

Boy Scout Troop 7, chartered by First Pres in 1927, will host their annual Christmas wreath sale during Coffee Hour on Sundays, November 27, and December 4. There are two sizes of wreaths, handmade from fresh greens, for sale. A 24” wreath is \$30.00 and a larger 28” wreath for \$40.00. Deck the halls and support Boy Scout Troop 7!

Hallelujah: The Bible and Handel’s *Messiah*



You know the music of Handel’s *Messiah*. In Advent, you will have a chance to participate in a study series for both the music lover and the biblical seeker and explore the scriptural texts of Handel’s *Messiah*. There will be several choices for you to enter this rich study. On Sunday mornings at 11:00 a.m. Rev. Jay Sanderford and our Resident Ministers will lead classes in Monteith Hall. Through out the week, the following small group discussions will be held:

- Sundays, December 4, 11 & 18 at 8:30 a.m. in the Lewis Room - Rev. Kent Palmquist
- Wednesdays, November 30, December 7 & 14 at 11:00 a.m. in the Lewis Room - Rev. Gary Oliver
- Thursdays, December 1, 8 & 15 at 6:00 p.m. in Monteith Hall - Kathy Wirstrom

To sign up for a discussion series, contact Rev. Jay Sanderford at jsanderford@firstpresbyterian.org or 662-4466, ext. 340.

Advent Happening

Saturday morning, December 3, 10:00 a.m.

Come create and craft in the Social Hall - there are activities for the littlest children to the oldest fun-loving adults! Begin your holiday preparations by making gifts and ornaments, decorating cookies, and designing Christmas cards. Friends are always welcomed and encouraged. Children can make all of their Grandma and Grandpa, Aunt and Uncle gifts in one craft filled morning! For any who wish, childcare is provided for infants through age two if older siblings and parents are busy at the Advent Happening. Make a reservation for childcare by contacting Debbie MacVey at dmacvey@firstpresbyterian.org or 662-4466 ext 342.



Advent Bible Study at Glacier Hills

December 1 through December 22, Rev. Emily Béghin will host an Advent Bible Study based on the lectionary on Tuesday mornings at 10:30 a.m in the Ecumenical Chapel at Glacier Hills. Join us for this wonderful opportunity to examine Scripture and enjoy fellowship with one another.

Honor and Remember by Giving a Poinsettia

Deadline Is Noon on Monday, December 12

Give a poinsettia to beautify our worship on December 18 and 24 in honor or memory of a loved one. Poinsettias are \$16 and can be ordered until noon on Monday, December 12 in the Church Office or at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/poinsettias-2016/>. Please note the early deadline! After worship on December 18, Deacons will deliver over 150 poinsettias to those in our congregation who are in life-care residences, grieving, recovering, or dealing with special circumstances.



Be a Part of the Christmas Eve Pageant

December 24 at 3:00 p.m.



All children, ages 3 and older, are invited to participate in our “come one, come all” Family Christmas Eve Pageant and Worship Service held 3:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve. All of our children are also invited to sing as a part of the pageant and are encouraged to participate even if they didn’t start with the choir in September. Doris Granum leads our children’s choir in rehearsal every Sunday from 10:30 to 10:55 a.m., except the Sunday after Thanksgiving. Sign your child up to participate in the pageant by December 5. Fill out a form found in Sunday school classrooms or sign up online at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/christmas-eve-pageant-registration/>

Age Guidelines - There are non-speaking parts for a multitude of children. Generally, three year-olds through Kindergarten are starbearers; first and second graders are shepherds; first through fifth graders are angels; and third through fifth graders are magi. This can vary a little, but after years of rehearsals we find this seems to work the best.

Christmas Pageant Rehearsals - There will be a parents’ meeting on Sunday, December 4, at 11:00 a.m. in Lewis Room to inform parents of pageant details and the rehearsal schedule. Some costumes will also be handed out. On Saturday, December 17 there will be a Pageant parts rehearsal in the Sanctuary. Children will rehearse their parts at the following times – magi at 9:00 a.m., shepherds at 9:30 a.m., starbearers at 10:15 a.m., and angels at 11:00 a.m. On Wednesday, December 21 there will be a dress rehearsal in the Sanctuary from 4:00 - 5:15 p.m. All participants including the choirs will meet and rehearse together.

The Family Christmas Eve Pageant and Worship Service will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, December 24 in the Sanctuary. Plan to arrive at church by 2:30 p.m.

Childcare on Christmas Eve

Need childcare? On Christmas Eve we provide childcare, by reservation, for children at the 3:00, 5:00, and 7:00 p.m. services. If you would like childcare for a child in your family, make a reservation by emailing Debbie MacVey at dmacvey@firstpresbyterian.org or by calling the Church Office at 662-4466.

Can you help with childcare? Additional childcare providers are needed for these services. If you can offer this wonderful gift to the families of our church, please call Debbie MacVey at 662-4466 ext 342, or dmacvey@firstpresbyterian.org.

Christmas Eve Children’s Gifts for the House by the Side of the Road

During the Christmas Pageant worship service at 3:00 p.m. on December 24, children bring as an offering the gift of new socks or underwear. The socks and underwear can be purchased in any size and should be simply wrapped in plain tissue paper. During the pageant, the children bring their humble gifts forward to the manger. After Christmas they are taken to the House by the Side of the Road and given to those in need.

Crèches and Cookies

Presbyterian Women Sponsor Coffee Hour

What would the holiday season be without beautiful creches? On December 11, at the Coffee Hour sponsored by Presbyterian Women, enjoy a lovely display of crèches collected by Jane Warner and donated to PW in 2007 by Mark Warner after his parents, Bob and Jane, died. Enjoy delicious cookies as you take a stroll through these art treasures!



CHRISTMAS CONCERTS HOSTED BY FIRST PRES:

- **An Organist's Christmas** - An Organist's Christmas will be held Friday, December 2, at 7:00 p.m. by organists Joshua Boyd, Shin-Ae Chun, and Timothy Huth and the Boychoir of Ann Arbor. Admission is free.
- **A Boychoir Christmas** - A Boychoir Christmas will be held Saturday, December 10, at 3:00 p.m. This annual concert is presented by the Boychoir of Ann Arbor. Tickets may be purchased through the Boychoir of Ann Arbor at <http://aaboychoir.org/> or by calling 663-5377.
- **Winter Concert** - A Winter Concert will be held by Women's Chamber Chorus of Ann Arbor on Friday, December 16, at 7:30 p.m. Admission is free. Learn more at <http://www.womenschamberchorus.com/>

Christmas Cookie Exchange

On Sunday, December 18, bring between one and four dozen homemade cookies to the Social Hall before worship at 9:30 a.m. Then, come to the Coffee Hour at 10:30 a.m., where you will receive a take-home container to fill with the homemade goodies from other bakers!

Special Offerings in December



PC(USA) Christmas Joy Offering will be accepted on December 18. Donations will be used to support retired church professionals and other church workers in times of need and also the development of future racial ethnic leaders of our church. Make checks out to First Presbyterian Church with Joy Offering on the memo line.

Christmas Eve Offering will be accepted on December 24 and will be donated to recovery projects in Haiti following Hurricane Matthew. Make checks out to First Presbyterian Church with Christmas Eve Offering on the memo line.

Christmas Eve Parking – Note Changes!

Please be considerate in parking choices as many visitors join us for worship on Christmas Eve. Overflow parking is available only at the Forest Street structure, a short walk down Forest Court, for our able-bodied members. **Please do not park at the adjoining sorority houses.**



Congregational Life

Rotating Shelter: Sharing Warmth with Our Neighbors

January is not the time to sleep outdoors in Michigan! First Pres opens its doors again, January 2-16, 2016, to provide sleeping space for up to 25 men directed here by the Shelter Association. Last winter more than 100 First Pres volunteers offered hospitality, made new friends within the First Pres and street communities, and put words into action. Our guests have commented that First Pres offers hospitality as much as it offers shelter. We are looking for evening (7:00 - 10:00 p.m.) and overnight hosts each night, and morning (around 7:00 a.m.) drivers on the weekends. There are at least three hosts each night, so you will get plenty of sleep. You can also help by donating hot food, snacks, gloves, hats, socks, hand warmers, and new long underwear. We also welcome First Pres groups whose members would like to serve together or host a specific night. Veteran volunteers will be present to help orient others. Consider joining this dedicated group who give of their time and receive so much from our guests. Watch for sign up opportunities near the Welcome Center or sign up online at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/rotating-shelter-volunteer-signup-2016/> Questions? Contact Melissa Anne Rogers, mrogers@firstpresbyterian.org or John Yodhes 677-4036, or any other of the members of our team - for more information.



Rotating Shelter Team - Jeanette Middleton, Jim Douglass, John Yodhes, Charlie Koopmann, Melissa Anne Rogers, Daniel Ervin, Judy Landau.

December Hilltoppers

Thad Polk on 'The Aging Brain' and... Christmas Carols!

Join us on Thursday, December 8, for Hilltoppers, at Noon, in the Social Hall. Geared for those 60 and up, all are welcome. Enjoy a luscious meal by Christine Miller for just \$5. Sign up in the Social Hall! Tom Granum will join us to lead our singing. Dr. Polk, Thurnau professor of Psychology at UM, and expert in cognitive science, has produced two courses for The Great Courses: The Addictive Brain, and The Aging Brain. Check out Dr. Polk's TEDxUofM talk: "Aging: It's not what you think" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrTIS0uKg6o> Sign up in the Church Office today!



"Sing, Choirs of Angels" Presbyterian Women Gathering Wednesday, December 21

"Who is Jesus According to John?" will be the study focus for lesson four in our ongoing Horizons Bible Study series, Who is Jesus? What a Difference a Lens Makes. Alice Garjanian will lead the study beginning at 9:30 a.m. in the Lewis Room.

Join us at 11:00 am. in Monteith Hall for the program "Sing, Choirs of Angels." First Pres' Director of Music Ministries Tom Granum, will lead us in delving into some of our favorite Christmas carols and songs, discovering the history behind them, how they originated, why they were written, and how they changed over the years.



Youth Connection

Youth Celebrate Christmas



MIDS Christmas Caroling - Sunday, December 11

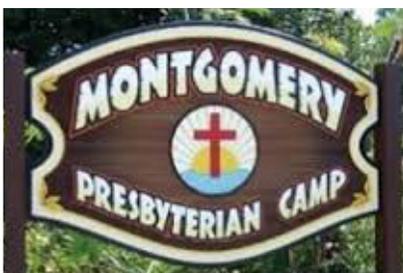
MIDS will team up with our young adult group, T2A2 to go Christmas Caroling at Whitehall Nursing Home. Wear a Santa hat and an ugly sweater! Bring a friend! We will meet at the nursing home, 3370 E Morgan Rd, Ann Arbor, at 6:00 p.m. and will carol until around 7:15 p.m. Jingle bells welcome! Questions? Contact Rev. Emily Béghin at 662-4466, ext. 355 or ebeghin@firstpresbyterian.org. Note: This is the last MIDS meeting of the year. The next meeting is January 8.

Keystone Christmas Party – Sunday, December 18, 5:30-8:00 p.m., Location TBA

High schoolers, bring a dessert to share and a wrapped gift for under \$12 for our gift exchange – or be daring and specific and bring a gift that costs \$11.55 exactly. Can you do it? Seek a gift you would love to receive. Bring a friend or two to this fun end of the year party.

Youth Mission Trips

- There is still room to join the Florida Mission Trip to the Montgomery Presbyterian Center in Starke, Florida, January 1-7. We will use our last day to snorkel with the manatee. Ten people are already registered for this mission trip.
- The Costa Rica Mission Trip, June 18-27, is open to all present high schoolers and their friends. The trip cost is \$1,200, \$900 due now, with the balance due by February 1. We will stay at Portantorchas Bible School in San José and work in the neighborhood. On the last weekend, we will visit Manuel Antonio National Park. See. Rev. Dr. Jim Monnett soon to register for the trip.





College Connection

Pancakes for College Students

The annual pancake supper will be Tuesday, December 13. As the semester winds down, students are working hard, and our hospitality goes a long way. We expect to serve over 250 hungry students from 10:00 p.m. to midnight and we need your help! Volunteers are needed to help with outreach, setup, tear down, cooking, serving, and more. Sign up at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/pancake-supper/> Questions? Contact Jenna Harms at 712-299-1971 or jharms@firstpresbyterian.org or. Don't have time to help? Monetary donations are needed as well. To contribute, make your check out to First Presbyterian Church with "Pancake Supper" on the memo line.



Financial Stewardship

Finance Office Hours

The Finance Office will be open Tuesday, December 27 through Friday, December 30, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. to assist you with any First Pres related financial inquiries or transactions you may have. Questions? Contact Anna Miller, Finance Manager, at amiller@firstpresbyterian.org or 662-4466, ext. 344.

2017 Annual Giving Envelopes

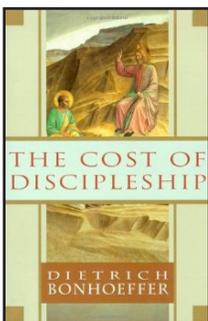
2017 Annual Giving envelopes will be available for pick up outside the Finance Office beginning Wednesday, December 21.

Words of Grace and Gratitude

Our church has a history of meeting its goals, and we believe this year will be no different. We will continue our outreach efforts, believing that making and keeping promises to God is an important and shared spiritual discipline. Our pledge goal for 2017 is \$1,700,000. As of November 15 we have received \$ \$1,328,501 in pledges, or 78% of our goal. If you have not yet pledged, we ask for your prayerful, and prompt, consideration. If you have already pledged, thank you! We also hope you've reflected your individual interests on the Opportunity to Serve form that came with your stewardship package. Together, let us continue to express our gratitude for the indescribable, and unearned, gift of God's grace.



Adult Education



A Men's Study Group at First Pres – Join Us!

On many Friday mornings, a group of men is beginning to meet, read Scripture, pore over one of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's classic books, and discuss practical, down-to-earth matters of faith. In December the Men's Study Group will meet on Fridays, December 2 and 16 at 8:00 a.m. We will generally meet the first and third Friday mornings in the Lewis Room on Fridays for coffee, study, and conversation and will continue in 2017. Several guys have volunteered to be our leaders for the next month including John LeDuc, Rol Kibler and Chris Queen. More Bonhoeffer books are available. All are welcome! Questions? Contact Rev. Jay Sanderford, jsanderford@firstpresbyterian.org or 662-4466, ext. 340.

Sunday Morning Class Schedule

Note: There will be no adult education classes on Sunday, December 25 or January 1.

@ 9:30 a.m.

9:30 -10:45 a.m. **The Bible @ 9:30 French Room/Library**

The Bible @ 9:30 continues a study of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. The class is led by Rev. Ed Koster. All are welcome!

9:30 a.m. **First Couples December 4 - 18 Monteith Hall**

December 4 - Planning Meeting

December 11 & 18 - Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The class will watch and discuss a DVD series on Dietrich Bonhoeffer



@ 11:00 a.m.



During the month of December the Exploring the Faith and Common Ground classes will meet together in Monteith Hall

December 4-18 Hallelujah: The Bible and Handel's *Messiah*

You know the music of Handel's *Messiah*. In Advent, First Pres will offer a chance to learn the scriptures. Led by Rev. Jay Sanderford and our Resident Ministers, these studies offer a careful examination of the biblical texts.



Faith In Action

Communion Sunday Food Collection

On Sunday, December 4, donations of food and money will be accepted for Food Gatherers.

In November, our Communion Sunday food collection went to Washtenaw Community College's Student Resource Center. We received this note of thanks:

First Pres' phone call last Friday was just in time. Our food pantry shelves are full again. The congregation of First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor is a blessing to Washtenaw Community College and its students. Thank you for your generous donation of food and continued support!

Here are some comments from students who have received help from Washtenaw Community College Emergency Food Pantry – "Helped with food when EBT was cancelled," "When I have no money, it's helped me get by," "I do not have food assistance nor enough money to grocery shop," "Helped feel my kids when I had nothing. Thank you!"

Kind regards,

The Student Resource Center Staff

Keeping Up with the Ludwigs

Our Mission Coworkers in Niger

In October we got good news about the rickshaw business being right on track. It is generating income and profits for the first six months and came out slightly ahead of the figures projected! We had fun with Halloween (a Star Wars theme!) and we're enjoying the freedom of not having our guard living with us during the day! In all these things we give thanks to God for the provision of just what we've needed and we appreciate your prayers and support that keep us going.

